

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Psalms: God's Nurture Of The Inner Man In The Life Of Faith

LXXVIII: Invitation To Learn To Heed God From The Lessons Of History

A. Invitation To Learn To Heed God From The Ephraimites' Failure

(Psalm 78:1-16)

I. Introduction

- A. The spiritual lessons of Biblical history are more important than even the lessons of secular history.
- B. Psalm 78:1-72 deals with Biblical history's repeat lessons on heeding God, and we view the first segment of that psalm in verses 1-16 on the lesson of the Ephraimites' failure for our insight and edification (as follows):

II. Invitation To Learn To Heed God From The Ephraimites' Failure, Psalm 78:1-16.

- A. The introductory remarks of this psalm comprise the first part of verse one in the Hebrew text (Kittel, Biblia Hebraica, p. 1042), so we stay with the numbering system of the English Bible.
- B. We thus translate Psalm 78:1-16 (with help from the NIV) as follows:
 - 1. "O my people, give ear to my teaching; listen to the words of my mouth," Psalm 78:1.
 - 2. "I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter hidden things, things from old --" (Psalm 78:2)
 - 3. "what we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us," Psalm 78:3.
 - 4. "We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of Jahweh, His power, and the wonders He has performed," Psalm 78:4.
 - 5. "He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which He commanded our forefathers to teach their children" (Psalm 78:5)
 - 6. "in order that the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children," Psalm 78:6.
 - 7. "Then they would put their confidence, hope (*kesel*, B. D. B., A Heb. and Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 492; H. A. W., T. W. O. T., 1980, v. I, p. 1012) in Elohim and would not forget His deeds but would keep His commands," Psalm 78:7.
 - 8. "They would not be like their forefathers -- a stubborn and rebellious (same adjectives of the apostate son in Deut. 21:18-21 whom the city elders were to put to death) generation, a generation that was not loyal to Him, and whose spirits were not faithful to El(ohim)," Psalm 78:8.
 - 9. "The men of Ephraim, though armed with bows, turned back on the day of battle;" (Psalm 78:9)
 - 10. "They did not keep the covenant of Elohim and refused to live by His law," Psalm 78:10.
 - 11. "They forgot what He had done, the wonder He had shown them," Psalm 78:11.
 - 12. "He did miracles in the sight of their fathers in the land of Egypt, in the region of Zoan," Psalm 78:12.
 - 13. "He divided the sea and led them through; He made the water to stand firm like a wall," Psalm 78:13.
 - 14. "He guided them with the cloud by day and with light from the fire all night," Psalm 78:14.
 - 15. "He split the rocks in the desert and gave them water as abundant as the seas;" Psalm 78:15.
 - 16. "He brought a stream out of a rocky crag and made water flow down like rivers," Psalm 78:16.
- C. We note significant observations and applications of this psalm (as follows):
 - 1. The specific failure of the men of Ephraim in verses 9-11 is not clarified for us (Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 851), but it was apparently well known to the generation Asaph first addressed with this psalm.
 - 2. The failure involved the Ephraimites turning back from battle even if they were well armed out of fear that failed to recall and heed the Lord's powerful help to their forefathers in the Exodus and in His miraculous provisions to sustain them for decades in the wilderness, v. 9-16. Israel had been delivered from a humanly overwhelming Egyptian chariot force at the Red Sea without one Israeli soldier having to draw a sword, and following that deliverance, God had sustained the nation for 40 years in the wilderness by great miracles of provision. This all made the unbelief of the men of Ephraim in the era of Asaph inexcusable.
 - 3. Failure to trust the Lord's promises to provide for one in conflict is tantamount to apostate rebellion (v. 8), so if we are tempted to fail to trust the Lord for some trial we face, we must trust Him or greatly sin!

Lesson: *God expected the men of Ephraim to recall His great deliverance of their forefathers from Egyptian bondage and then His sustenance of the nation for 40 years as they traveled in the wilderness to the Promised Land as the precedent for trusting Him to head into the battle they faced. Their failure here was inexcusable.*

Application: *May we learn from the lessons of Bible history to trust God in facing conflicts lest we gravely sin!*